

CPC Meeting Minutes – April 10, 2012

7:30 p.m.

The Kingsbury Room
Wellesley Police Station

The Wellesley Community Preservation Committee met at 7:30 p.m. in the Kingsbury Room of the Wellesley Police Station.

Present were the following CPC members: Tony Parker (Chair), Allan Port (Vice Chair), Jim Conlin, Joan Gaughan, Bob Goldkamp, Dwight Lueth, Jeanne Conroy and Barbara McMahon. Also present were Gig Babson and Don McCauley from the Board of Selectmen; Hans Larsen, Executive Director of the Town of Wellesley; Al Robinson, Town Counsel; Andy Wrobel from the Recreation Commission. Members of the Advisory Committee present were Virginia Ferko, Advisory Chair; Dave Murphy, Advisory Vice Chair; and Marjorie Freiman, Advisory liaison to the CPC.

The Chair called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m.

Citizens Speak: There were no citizens who chose to speak.

Presentation by the St. James Committee: Mr. Port, the CPC representative to the St. James Ad Hoc Committee, reported that the Town of Wellesley had announced during the 2012 Town Meeting that the Town of Wellesley had entered a Purchase and Sale Agreement with the Archdiocese of Boston to purchase the St. James the Great property on Route 9 for a sum of \$3.8 million, subject to Town Meeting approval and a 21 E Study (environmental site assessment.) A significant portion of that amount is requested from available CPA funds. The matter will be the subject of a Special Town Meeting on June 13, 2012. The Board of Selectmen provided the CPC with a Short Form Preliminary Application; the sponsoring organizations are the Board of Selectmen and the St. James Ad Hoc Study Committee.

Mr. McCauley, speaking on behalf of the St. James Ad Hoc Study Committee, recapped some of the “history” of the St. James site, starting with the closing of the parish by the Archdiocese of Boston in October of 2004, pointing out that the Planning Board had taken note of this land possibly becoming available in the Comprehensive Plan in 2007 and included this site in the Wellesley West Gateway initiative. The Planning Board engaged Concord Square Associates to help examine alternative uses for the St. James property. In 2010 a number of public meetings were held with the feedback indicating strong support for use of the St. James site as a recreational facility. As a result of the study and the public forums, the St. James Ad Hoc Study Committee was formed.

The St. James Ad Hoc Study Committee requested and was granted CPC funds to engage Gale Associates to conduct a feasibility study for use of the site as a recreational facility, and Colliers Meredith McGrew to conduct an assessment of the parcel. The results of these studies were presented to various Town boards, including the Board of Selectmen and Advisory Committee, and were met with enthusiasm.

The request at this time is for CPC funds to cover 70% of the \$3.8 million purchase price for the land, or \$2.66 million. Mr. McCauley reported that the site is just shy of 8 acres, with perhaps half of that being wetlands and the west end of the lot being in a flood plain area. Proposed plans include one rectangular multi-purpose playing field with the potential development of a hockey rink and a swimming pool. The

hope is that CPC funds will be used for the proposed playing field while the hockey rink and swimming pool would be developed with private funding. The plans for the development of the site will more fully developed and detailed once the land is acquired by the Town.

Mr. McCauley indicated that the topographical characteristics of the site work well with the proposed plans: the steep slope at the back of the site provides a natural buffer to the adjacent neighbors and the flood plain area located on the west side of the parcel and the wetlands area to the back work well with the playing field location. The development of the site would likely be a phased plan, with the playing field being the first component completed. The structures to house the rink and pool would cover less than 20% of the site and could be complimentary from an energy standpoint as well as share common facilities such as locker rooms and restrooms. Quite a bit of planning remains to be done in terms of plans for the development of the site.

Currently, the Town is in the 90-day “financing contingency” period of the P & S, during which Town Meeting approval must be secured. Once that period is completed, there is a period for site investigation, during which additional site surveys and wetlands delineation will be conducted. The timeline calls for a closing on the property in September.

Following Mr. McCauley’s report, there was a discussion of important dates and deadlines. The warrant for the Special Town Meeting will close on Friday, April 13. Ms. Babson indicated that the plan would be for the St. James Ad Hoc Study Committee, the Board of Selectmen and the CPC to file one report for the Advisory booklet, with each group giving its recommendation in the appropriate section of the report. Ms. Ferko, Advisory Chair, indicated that the deadline for the Advisory report will be May 29. Public forums to discuss the land acquisition will take place the first week of May. The Advisory Public hearing will take place on May 16 in the Selectmen’s meeting room at Town Hall; the CPC will hold its public hearing as a joint hearing with Advisory. On the recommendation of Al Robinson, Town Counsel, CPC will take its official vote after the May 16th hearing.

There was a discussion as to whether the 70/30 formula is the correct one to be using for determining CPA fund eligibility, can that be accurately determined without the survey and studies still to be conducted and would the Town be locked into numbers that were not exact. Members of the St. James Committee as well as Town Counsel are quite confident that the numbers are accurate, good faith numbers based on the extensive work already conducted by Gale Associates and the Planning Department. In addition, Town Counsel pointed out that the Town will be “cross-checked” when the plan is final and the Town files the conservation restrictions that will be put in place in perpetuity.

There was some discussion of how much land for parking could be legally acquired with CPA funds, and if the proposed plan provided for adequate parking for the site. Members of the St. James Committee believe that the 30% of the land not eligible for CPA funds under the current formula more than adequately covers parking spaces associated with the planned structures, which will cover approximately 18% of the land. The question of how much parking will be required under zoning bylaws will be discussed at length with Planning Department prior to the Special Town meeting, but the sense of the St. James Study Committee is that both Gale Associates and Meghan Jop, Planning Director for Wellesley who also sits on the St. James Committee, have looked at the parking issue and believe the proposed plan meets parking requirements. Hans Larsen agreed to request Beta Engineering, the Town’s traffic engineer, analyze the parking question prior to the STM.

Joan Gaughan, NRC rep to CPC, proposed using CPC administrative funds to conduct the wetlands delineation prior to the STM. It is the recommendation of Town Counsel that the Town hold off any surveys or studies until the appropriation is approved at Town Meeting. Once the purchase of the land is approved, the Town will proceed with total due diligence.

There was some discussion of the actual request of CPC, which total \$2.66 million, which represents 70% of total land acquisition costs, but is less than the \$3.5 million the CPC financial plan has anticipated. The breakdown for the source of the funds would be approximately \$700,000 from the funds designated for Open Space and approximately \$1.9 million from Undesignated Reserves. The plan would be that the balance of the CPA funds planned for the St. James project (approximately \$900,000) could be used for the development of the playing field part of the project.

Although the STM is focused on the acquisition of the St. James land, Mr. Lueth suggested that the Study Committee be prepared to answer questions about the proposed project in terms of how the ice rink and pool will be developed. Mr. Wrobel indicated that the hockey community, both the youth hockey program and the school program, will bundle funds to fund the private development of a privately owned facility; the financing of the development of the pool is not as clear just yet and there has not been a discussion of a Town-financed pool development. There was some discussion of the Town's interest in privately developed facilities and what Town obligations will be in the future. It was reported that the Town is looking at different models of how this type of development has worked in other towns but until the land is secured no plans can be furthered.

The question was raised of the restrictions placed on the Town by the Purchase and Sale Agreement. Mr. Robinson replied that these restrictions are driven by Canon law and that they will be included in the deed.

It was decided that the CPC meeting scheduled for May 9th will remain on the calendar; CPC will hold its public hearing in conjunction with Advisory on May 16th and take its vote immediately after.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:15 with a motion by Mr. Port, seconded by Mr. Parker.